London Society of the Friends of the People

Authentic Copy of a Petition, praying for a Reform in Parliament, preſented to the Houſe of Commons by Charles Grey, Eſq. on Monday, 6th May 1793; and ſigned only by the Members of the Society of The Friends of the People, aſſociated for the Purpoſe of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

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To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament aſſembled.

The humble Petition, &c. ſheweth,

THAT by the form and ſpirit of the Britiſh Conſtitution, the King is veſted with the ſole Executive Power.

That the Houſe of Lords conſiſts of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, deriving their titles and conſequence either from the Crown, or from Hereditary Privileges.

That theſe two powers, if they acted without controul, would form either a deſpotic Monarchy, or a dangerous Oligarchy.

That the wiſdom of our anceſtors hath contrived, that theſe authorities may be rendered not only harmleſs, but beneficial, and be exerciſed for the ſecurity and happineſs of the People.

That this ſecurity and happineſs are to be looked for in the introduction of a Third Eſtate, diſtinct from, and a check upon the other two branches of the Legiſlature; created by, repreſenting, and reſponſible to the People themſelves.

That ſo much depending upon the preſervation of this Third Eſtate, in ſuch its conſtitutional purity and ſtrength, your Petitioners are reaſonably jealous of whatever may appear to vitiate the one, or to impair the other.

That at the preſent day the Houſe of Commons does not fully and fairly repreſent the People of England, which, conſiſtently with what your Petitioners conceive to be the principles of the Conſtitution, they conſider as a grievance, and therefore, with all becoming reſpect, lay their complaints before your Honourable Houſe.

That though the terms in which your Petitioners ſtate their grievance may be looked upon as ſtrong, yet your Honourable Houſe is entreated to believe that no expreſſion is made uſe of for the purpoſe of offence.

Your Petitioners in affirming that your Honourable Houſe is not an adequate Repreſentation of the People of England, do but ſtate a fact, which, if the word "Repreſentation" be accepted in its fair and obvious ſenſe, they are ready to prove, and which they think detrimental to their intereſts, and contrary to the ſpirit of the Conſtitution.

How far this inadequate Repreſentation is prejudicial to their intereſts, your Petitioners apprehend they may be allowed to decide for themſelves; but how far it is contrary to the ſpirit of the Conſtitution, they refer to the conſideration of your Honourable Houſe.

If your Honourable Houſe ſhall be pleaſed to determine that the People of England ought not to be fully repreſented, your Petitioners pray that ſuch your determination may be made known, to the end that the People may be

apprized of their real ſituation ; but if your Honourable Houſe ſhall conceive that the People are already fully repreſented, then your Petitioners beg leave to call your attention to the following facts:

Your Petitioners complain, that the number of Repreſentatives aſſigned to the different Counties is groſsly diſproportioned to their comparative Extent, Population, and Trade.

Your Petitioners complain, that the Elective Franchiſe is ſo partially and unequally diſtributed, and is in ſo many inſtances committed to bodies of men of ſuch very limited numbers, that the majority of your Honourable Houſe is elected by leſs than fifteen thouſand Electors, which, even if the male adults in the kingdom be eſtimated at ſo low a number as three millions, is not more than the two hundreth part of the people to be repreſented.

Your Petitioners complain, that the right of voting is regulated by no uniform or rational principle.

Your Petitioners complain, that the exerciſe of the Elective Franchiſe is only renewed once in Seven Years.

Your Petitioners thus diſtinctly ſtate the ſubject matter of their complaints, that your Honourable Houſe may be convinced that they are acting from no ſpirit of general diſcontent, and that you may with the more eaſe be enabled to enquire into the facts, and to apply the remedy.

For the evidence in ſupport of the First Complaint, your Petitioners refer to the Return Book of your Honourable Houſe. — Is it fitting, that Rutland and Yorkſhire ſhould bear an equal rank in the ſcale of County Repreſentation; or can it be right, that Cornwall alone ſhould, by its extravagant proportion of Borough Members, outnumber not only the Repreſentatives of Yorkſhire and Rutland together, but of Middleſex added to them? Or, if a diſtinction be taken between the landed and the trading intereſts, muſt it not appear monſtrous that Cornwall and Wiltſhire ſhould ſend more Borough Members to Parliament, than Yorkſhire, Lancaſhire, Warwickſhire, Middleſex, Worceſterſhire, and Somerſetſhire united? and that the total Repreſentation of all Scotland ſhould but exceed by one Member, the number returned for a ſingle County in England?

The Second Complaint of your Petitioners, is founded on the unequal proportions in which the Elective Franchiſe is diſtributed, and in ſupport of it,

They affirm, that ſeventy of your Honourable Members are returned by thirty-five places, where the right of voting is veſted in Burgage and other Tenures of a ſimilar deſcription, and in which it would be to trifle with the patience of your Honourable Houſe, to mention any number of voters whatever, the elections at the places alluded to being notoriouſly a mere matter of form. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the ſeventy Honourable Members ſo choſen, ninety more of your Honourable Members are elected by forty-ſix places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds fifty. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ſixty ſo elected, thirty-ſeven more of your Honourable Members are elected by nineteen places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds one hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

They affirm, that in addition to the hundred and ninety-ſeven Honourable Members ſo choſen, fifty-two more are returned to ſerve in Parliament, by twenty-ſix places, in none of which the number of Voters exceeds two hundred. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

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They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and forty-nine ſo elected, twenty more are returned to ſerve in Parliament for counties in Scotland, by leſs than one hundred Electors each, and ten for counties in Scotland by leſs than two hundred and fifty each. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove, even admitting the validity of fictitious votes.

They affirm, that in addition to the two hundred and ſeventy-nine ſo elected, thirteen diſtricts of Burghs in Scotland, not containing one hundred voters each, and two diſtricts of Burghs, not containing one hundred and twenty-five each, return fifteen more Honourable Members. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

And in this manner, according to the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation, two hundred and ninety-four of your Honourable Members are choſen, and, being a majority of the entire Houſe of Commons, are enabled to decide all queſtions in the name of the whole people of England and Scotland.

The THIRD COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is founded on the preſent complicated rights of voting. From the caprice with which they have been varied, and the obſcurity in which they have become involved by time and contradictory deciſions, they are become a ſource of infinite confuſion, litigation, and expence.

Your Petitioners need not tender any evidence of the inconveniences which ariſe from this defect in the Repreſentation, becauſe the proof is to be found in your Journals, and the Minutes of the different Committees who have been appointed under the 10th and 11th of the King. Your Honourable Houſe is but too well acquainted with the tedious, intricate, and expenſive ſcenes of litigation which have been brought before you, in attempting to ſettle the legal import of thoſe numerous diſtinctions which perplex and confound the preſent rights of voting. How many months of your valuable time have been waſted in liſtening to the wrangling of Lawyers upon the various ſpecies of Burgagehold, Leaſehold, and Freehold! How many Committees have been occupied in inveſtigating the nature of Scot and Lot, Potwallers, Commonalty, Populacy, reſiant Inhabitants, and Inhabitants at large! What labour and reſearch have been employed in endeavouring to aſcertain the legal claims of Borough-men, Aldermen, Port-men, Select-men, Burgeſſes, and Council-men! And what confuſion has ariſen from the complicated operation of claſhing Charters, from freemen reſident and non-reſident, and from the different modes of obtaining the freedom of Corporations by birth, by ſervitude, by marriage, by redemption, by election, and by purchaſe! On all theſe points it is however needleſs for your Petitioners to enlarge, when your Honourable Houſe recollects the following facts; namely, that ſince the twenty-ſecond of December 1790, no leſs than twenty-one committees have been employed in deciding upon litigated rights of voting. Of theſe, eight were occupied with the diſputes of three Boroughs, and there are Petitions from four places yet remaining before your Honourable Houſe, waiting for a final deciſion to inform the Electors what their rights really are.

But the complaint of your Petitioners on the ſubject of the want of an uniform, and equitable principle in regulating the right of voting, extends as well to the arbitrary manner in which ſome are excluded, as to the intricate qualifications by which others are admitted to the exerciſe of that privilege.

Religious Opinions create an incapacity to vote. All Papiſts are excluded generally, and, by the operation of the Teſt Laws, Proteſtant Diſſenters are deprived of a voice in the election of Repreſentatives in about thirty Boroughs, where the right of voting is confined to Corporate Officers alone; a deprivation the more unjuſtifiable, becauſe, though conſidered as unworthy to vote,

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they are deemed capable of being elected, and may be the Representatives of the very places for which they are disqualified from being the Electors.

A man possessed of one thousand pounds per annum, or any other sum, arising from copyhold, leasehold for ninety-nine years, trade, property in the Public Funds, or even freehold in the city of London, and many other cities and towns having peculiar jurisdictions, is not thereby intitled to vote. Here again a strange distinction is taken between electing and representing, as a copyhold is a sufficient qualification to sit in your Honourable House.

A man paying taxes to any amount, how great soever, for his domestic establishment, does not thereby obtain a right to vote, unless his residence be in some borough where that right is vested in the inhabitants. This exception operates in sixty places, of which twenty-eight do not contain three hundred voters each, and the number of householders in England and Wales (exclusive of Scotland), who pay all taxes, is 714,911, and of householders who pay all Taxes, but the House and Window Taxes, is 284,459, as appears by a return made to your Honourable House in 1785; so that, even supposing the sixty places above mentioned to contain, one with another, one thousand voters in each, there will remain 939,370 householders who have no voice in the Representation, unless they have obtained it by accident or by purchase. Neither their contributions to the public burdens, their peaceable demeanor as good subjects, nor their general respectability and merits as useful citizens, afford them, as the law now stands, the smallest pretensions to participate in the choice of those, who, under the name of their Representatives, may dispose of their fortunes and liberties.

In Scotland, the grievance arising from the nature of the rights of voting, has a different and still more intolerable operation. In that great and populous division of the kingdom, not only the great mass of the householders, but of the landholders also are excluded from all participation in the choice of Representatives. By the remains of the feudal system in the counties, the vote is severed from the land, and attached to what is called the superiority. In other words it is taken from the substance, and transferred to the shadow, because, though each of these superiorities must, with very few exceptions, arise from lands of the present annual value of four hundred pounds sterling, yet it is not necessary that the lands should do more than give a name to the superiority, the possessor of which may retain the right of voting notwithstanding he be divested of the property. And on the other hand, great landholders have the means afforded them by the same system, of adding to their influence, without expence to themselves, by communicating to their confidential friends the privilege of electing Members to serve in Parliament. The process by which this operation is performed is simple. He who wishes to encrease the number of his dependent votes, surrenders his charter to the Crown, and, parcelling out his estate into as many lots of four hundred pounds per annum, as may be convenient, conveys them to such as he can confide in. To these, new charters are, upon application, granted by the Crown, so as to erect each of them into a superiority, which privilege once obtained, the land itself is reconveyed to the original grantor; and thus the Representatives of the landed interest in Scotland may be chosen by those who have no real or beneficial interest in the land.

Such is the situation in which the Counties of Scotland are placed. With respect to the Burghs, every thing that bears even the semblance of popular choice, has long been done away. The election of Members to serve in Parliament is vested in the Magistrates and Town Councils, who, having by various innovations, constituted themselves into self-elected bodies, instead of

Officers

Officers freely chosen by the inhabitants at large, have deprived the People of all participation in that privilege, the free exercise of which affords the only security they can possess for the protection of their liberties and property.

The FOURTH and LAST COMPLAINT of your Petitioners is the length of the duration of Parliaments. Your Honourable House knows, that by the ancient laws and statutes of this kingdom frequent Parliaments ought to be held; and that the sixth of William and Mary, c. 2. (since repealed) speaking while the spirit of the Revolution was yet warm, declared, that "frequent and new Parliaments tend very much to the happy union and good "agreement between King and People;" and enacted, that no Parliament should last longer than three years. Your Petitioners, without presuming to add to such an authority by any observations of their own, humbly pray that Parliaments may not be continued for seven years.

YOUR PETITIONERS have thus laid before you the specific grounds of complaint, from which they conceive every evil in the Representation to spring, and on which they think every abuse and inconvenience is founded.

What those abuses are, and how great that inconvenience is, it becomes your Petitioners to state, as the best means of justifying their present application to your Honourable House.

Your Petitioners then affirm, that from the combined operation of the defects they have pointed out, arise those scenes of confusion, litigation, and expence which so disgrace the name, and that extensive system of PRIVATE PATRONAGE which is so repugnant to the spirit of free Representation.

Your Petitioners entreat of your Honourable House to consider the manner in which Elections are conducted, and to reflect upon the extreme inconvenience to which Electors are exposed, and the intolerable expence to which Candidates are subjected.

Your Honourable House knows that tumults, disorders, outrages, and perjury, are too often the dreadful attendants on contested Elections as at this time carried on.

Your Honourable House knows that polls are only taken in one fixed place for each County, City, and Borough, whether the number of Voters be ten or ten thousand, and whether they be resident or dispersed over England.

Your Honourable House knows that polls, however few the Electors, may by law be continued for fifteen days, and even then be subjected to a scrutiny.

Your Honourable House knows that the management and conduct of polls is committed to Returning Officers, who, from the very nature of the proceedings, must be invested with extensive and discretionary powers, and who, it appears by every volume of your Journals, have but too often exercised those powers with the most gross partiality and the most scandalous corruption.

Of Elections arranged with such little regard to the accommodation of the parties, acknowledged to require such a length of time to complete, and trusted to the superintendance of such suspicious agents, your Petitioners might easily draw out a detail of the expence. But it is unnecessary. The fact is too notorious to require proof, that scarce an instance can be produced where a Member has obtained a disputed seat in Parliament at a less cost than from two to five thousand pounds; particular cases are not wanting where ten times these sums have been paid, but it is sufficient for your Petitioners to affirm, and to be able to prove it if denied, that, such is the expence of a contested return, that he who should become a Candidate with even

greater funds than the laws require him to ſwear to as his qualification to ſit in your Honourable Houſe, muſt either relinquiſh his pretenſions on the appearance of an oppoſition, or ſo reduce his fortune in the conteſt, that he could not take his ſeat without perjury.

The reviſion of the original polls before the Committees of your Honourable Houſe, upon appeals from the deciſions of the Returning Officers, affords a freſh ſource of vexation and expence to all parties. Your Honourable Houſe knows, that the complicated rights of voting, and the ſhameful practices which diſgrace election proceedings, have ſo loaded your table with Petitions for judgment and redreſs, that one half of the uſual duration of a Parliament has ſcarcely been ſufficient to ſettle who is entitled to ſit for the other half; and it was not till within the laſt two months that your Honourable Houſe had an opportunity of diſcovering, that the two Gentlemen, who ſat and voted near three years as the Repreſentatives of the Borough of Stockbridge, had procured themſelves to be elected by the moſt ſcandalous bribery; and that the two Gentlemen, who ſat and voted during as long a period for the Borough of Great Grimſby, had not been elected at all.

In truth, all the miſchiefs of the preſent ſyſtem of Repreſentation are aſcertained by the difficulties which even the zeal and wiſdom of your Honourable Houſe experiences in attending to the variety of complaints brought before you. Though your Committees ſit five hours every day from the time of their appointment, they generally are unable to come to a deciſion in leſs than a fortnight, and very frequently are detained from thirty to forty days. The Weſtminſter caſe in 1789, will even furniſh your Honourable Houſe with an inſtance, where, after deliberating forty-five days, a Committee gravely reſolved, that, "From an attentive conſideration of the circumſtances relating "to the cauſe, a final deciſion of the buſineſs before them could not take "place in the courſe of the Seſſion, and that not improbably the whole of the "Parliament" (having at that time near two years longer to ſit) "might be "conſumed in a tedious and expenſive litigation;" and they recommended it to the Petitioners to withdraw their Petition, which, after a fruitleſs perſeverance of above three months, they were actually obliged to ſubmit to.

Your Petitioners will only upon this ſubject further add, that the expence to each of the parties, who have been either Plaintiff or Defendant in Petitions tried before your Honourable Houſe in the preſent Seſſion, has, upon an average, amounted to above one hundred pounds per day; and that the Attornies' Bills in one cauſe, the trial of which in point of form only laſted two days, and in point of fact only ſix hours, amounted to very near twelve hundred pounds. And this your Petitioners are ready to prove.

YOUR PETITIONERS muſt now beg leave to call the attention of your Honourable Houſe to the greateſt evil produced by theſe defects in the Repreſentation of which they complain, namely, the extent of PRIVATE PARLIAMENTARY PATRONAGE; an abuſe which obviouſly tends to exclude the great maſs of the People from any ſubſtantial influence in the Election of the Houſe of Commons, and which, in its progreſs, threatens to uſurp the ſovereignty of the country, to the equal danger of the King, of the Lords, and of the Commons.

The Patronage of which your Petitioners complain, is of *two* kinds: *That* which ariſes from the unequal diſtribution of the Elective Franchiſe, and the peculiar rights of voting by which certain places return Members to ſerve in Parliaments; and *that* which ariſes from the expence attending conteſted Elections, and the conſequent degree of power acquired by wealth.

By theſe two means, a weight of Parliamentary Influence has been obtained by certain individuals, forbidden by the ſpirit of the laws, and in its conſequences

conſequences moſt dangerous to the Liberties of the People of Great Britain.

The operation of the *firſt* ſpecies of Patronage is direct, and ſubject to poſitive proof. EIGHTY-FOUR individuals do by their own immediate authority ſend ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVEN of your Honourable Members to Parliament. And this your Petitioners are ready, if the fact be diſputed, to prove, and to name the Members and the Patrons.

The *ſecond* ſpecies of Patronage cannot be ſhewn with equal accuracy, though it is felt with equal force.

Your Petitioners are convinced, that in addition to the one hundred and fifty-ſeven Honourable Members above-mentioned, one hundred and fifty more, making in the whole THREE HUNDRED AND SEVEN, are returned to your Honourable Houſe, not by the collective voice of thoſe whom they appear to repreſent, but by the recommendation of ſeventy powerful individuals, added to the eighty-four before-mentioned, and making the total number of Patrons altogether only ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOUR, who return a DECIDED MAJORITY of your Honourable Houſe.

If your Honourable Houſe will accept as evidence the common report and general belief of the Counties, Cities, and Boroughs, which return the Members alluded to, your Petitioners are ready to name them, and to prove the fact; or if the Members in queſtion can be made parties to the enquiry, your Petitions will name them, and be governed by the teſtimony which they themſelves ſhall publicly give. But if neither of theſe proofs be thought conſiſtent with the proceedings of your Honourable Houſe, then your Petitioners can only aſſert their belief of the fact, which they hereby do in the moſt ſolemn manner, and on the moſt deliberate conviction.

Your Petitioners entreat your Honourable Houſe to believe that, in complaining of this ſpecies of influence, it is not their intention or deſire to decry or to condemn that juſt and natural attachment which they, who are enabled by their fortune, and inclined by their diſpoſition, to apply great means to honourable and benevolent ends, will always inſure to themſelves. What your Petitioners complain of is, that property, whether well or ill employed, has equal power; that the preſent ſyſtem of Repreſentation gives to it a degree of weight which renders it independent of character; which enables it to excite fear as well as to procure reſpect, and which confines the choice of Electors within the ranks of opulence, becauſe, though it cannot make riches the ſole object of their affection and confidence, it can and does throw obſtacles, almoſt inſurmountable, in the way of every man who is not rich, and thereby ſecures to a ſelect few the capability of becoming Candidates themſelves, or ſupporting the pretenſions of others. Of this your Petitioners complain loudly, becauſe they conceive it to be highly unjuſt, that, while the language of the law requires from a Candidate no greater eſtate, as a qualification, than a few hundred pounds per annum, the operation of the law ſhould diſqualify every man whoſe rental is not extended to thouſands; and that, at the ſame time that the Legiſlature appears to give the Electors a choice from amongſt thoſe who poſſeſs a moderate and independent competence, it ſhould virtually compel them to chooſe from amongſt thoſe who themſelves abound in wealth, or are ſupported by the wealth of others.

YOUR PETITIONERS are the more alarmed at the progreſs of private patronage, becauſe it is rapidly leading to conſequences which menace the very exiſtence of the Conſtitution.

At the commencement of every ſeſſion of Parliament, your Honourable Houſe, acting up to the laudable jealouſy of your predeceſſors, and ſpeaking

the pure, conſtitutional language of a Britiſh Houſe of Commons, reſolve, as appears by your Journals, "That no Peer of this realm hath any right to "give his vote in the Election of any Member to ſerve in Parliament;" and alſo, "That it is a high infringement upon the liberties and privileges of "the Commons of Great Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any Lord "Lieutenant of any County, to concern themſelves in the Elections of Mem-"bers to ſerve for the Commons in Parliament."

Your Petitioners inform your Honourable Houſe, and are ready to prove it at your bar, that they have the moſt reaſonable grounds to ſuſpect that no leſs than ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY of your Honourable Members owe their Elections entirely to the interference of Peers; and your Petitioners are prepared to ſhew by legal evidence, that forty PEERS, in defiance of your reſolutions, have poſſeſſed themſelves of ſo many Burgage Tenures, and obtained ſuch an abſolute and uncontrouled command in very many ſmall Boroughs in the kingdom, as to be enabled by their own poſitive authority to return EIGHTY-ONE of your Honourable Members.

Your Petitioners will, however, urge this grievance of the interference of Peers in Elections no further, becauſe they are ſatisfied that it is unneceſſary. Numbers of your Honourable Members muſt individually have known the fact, but collectively your Honourable Houſe has undoubtedly been a ſtranger to it. It is now brought before you by thoſe who tender evidence of the truth of what they aſſert, and they conceive it would be improper in them to aſk that by petition, which muſt be looked for as the certain reſult of your own honourable attachment to your own liberties and privileges.

YOUR PETITIONERS have thus laid before your Honourable Houſe, what the miſchiefs are which ariſe from the preſent ſtate of the Repreſentation, and what they conceive to be the grounds of thoſe miſchiefs, and therefore pray to have removed.

They now humbly beg leave to offer their reaſons, why they are anxious that ſome remedy ſhould be immediately applied.

Your Petitioners truſt they may be allowed to ſtate, becauſe they are ready to prove, that Seats in your Honourable Houſe are ſought for at a moſt extravagant and increaſing rate of expence.

What can have ſo much augmented the ambition to ſit in your Honourable Houſe, your Petitioners do not preſume accurately to have diſcovered, but the means taken by Candidates to obtain, and by Electors to beſtow that honour, evidently appear to have been increaſing in a progreſſive degree of fraud and corruption. Your Petitioners are induced to make this aſſertion by the Legiſlature having found it neceſſary, during the laſt and preſent reigns, ſo much to ſwell the Statute Book with laws for the prevention of thoſe offences.

As far as conjecture can lead your Petitioners, they muſt ſuppoſe, that the encreaſed National Debt, and the conſequent increaſe of influence, are the cauſes of the encreaſed eagerneſs of individuals to become Members of the Houſe of Commons, and of their indifference as to the means uſed to gratify their ſpeculations. To prove that they do not ſtate this wantonly, or without ſubſtantial grounds, they humbly beg to call your attention to the following Table, all the vouchers for which are to be found in the Journals of your Honourable Houſe, or in different Acts of Parliament.

The number of Statutes found neceſſary to preſerve

At

At the Revolution	The Public Revenue did not exceed	£ 2,100,000	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had not exceeded -	£ 1,900,000	The number of Statutes found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom and independence of Parliament, to regulate Elections, and to prevent frauds, bribery, &c. amounted only to — 14
At the death of William III.	The Public Revenue had increaſed to about	3,950,000	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had increaſed to about -	1,950,000	The number of Statutes found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increaſed to - - - - 26
At the death of Queen Anne,	The Public Revenue had increaſed to about	6,000,000	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had increaſed to about -	2,000,000	The number of Statues found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increaſed to - - 35
At the death of George I.	The Public Revenue had increaſed to about	6,800,000	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had increaſed to about -	2,600,000	The number of Statutes found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increaſed to - - 37
At the death of George II. -	The Public Revenue had increaſed to about	8,600,000	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had increaſed to about -	2,800,000	The number of Statutes found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increaſed to - - 49
In the 31ſt year of the reign of his preſent Majeſty	The Public Revenue had increaſed to above	16,000,0	The Peace Eſtabliſhment had increaſed to above -	5,000,000	The number of Statutes, found neceſſary to preſerve the freedom of Parliament, to prevent bribery, &c. increaſed to - - 65

It is upon this evidence of the increaſe of taxes, eſtabliſhments, and influence, and the increaſe of laws found neceſſary to repel the increaſing attacks upon the purity and freedom of Elections, that your Petitioners conceive it high time to enquire into the premiſes.

Your Petitioners are confident that in what they have ſtated, they are ſupported by the evidence of facts, and they truſt that, in conveying thoſe facts to your Honourable Houſe, they have not been betrayed into the language of reproach, or diſreſpect. Anxious to preſerve in its purity a Conſtitution they love and admire, they have thought it their duty to lay before you, not general ſpeculations deduced from theoretical opinions, but poſitive truths ſuſceptible of direct proof, and if in the performance of this taſk, they have been obliged to call your attention to aſſertions which you have not been accuſtomed to hear, and which they lament that they are compelled to make, they intreat the indulgence of your Honourable Houſe.

Your Petitioners will only further treſpaſs upon your time, while they recapitulate the objects of their prayer, which are,

That your Honourable Houſe will be pleaſed to take ſuch meaſures, as to your wiſdom may ſeem meet, to remove the evils ariſing from the unequal manner in which the different parts of the kingdom are admitted to participate in the Repreſentation.

To correct the partial diſtribution of the Elective Franchiſe, which commits the choice of Repreſentatives to ſelect bodies of men of ſuch limited numbers as renders them an eaſy prey to the artful, or a ready purchaſe to the wealthy.

To regulate the right of voting upon an uniform and equitable principle.

And finally to ſhorten the duration of Parliaments, and by removing the cauſes of that confuſion, litigation and expence, with which they are at this day conducted, to render frequent and new Elections, what our Anceſtors at the Revolution aſſerted them to be, the means of a happy union and good agreement between the King and People.

And your Petitioners ſhall ever pray.

In the Petition it was thought adviſeable to avoid any aſſertion of facts which were not capable of incontrovertible evidence. Hence it is that in the following Table, which has now ſtood the teſt of four months examination, the number of Members ſtated to be returned by private patronage exceeds the number mentioned in the Petition. There are certain inſtances in which, though the Influence be deciſive and notorious, it might be difficult to produce any ſuch direct *proof* of it as a Committee of the Houſe of Commons might require.

TABLE

TABLE OF PARLIAMENTARY PATRONAGE.

Extracted from the Report on the State of the Representation, published by the Society of the Friends of the People.

NAMES of PATRONS.	NOMINATIONS.		INFLUENCE.	Total Members returned by Peers.
Earl of Lonſdale *nominates*	1 for Appleby 2 — Cockermouth 2 — Haſlemere	*influences*	2 for Weſtmoreland	7
Lord Mount Edgecumbe	1 — Boſſiney 2 — Leſtwithiel 2 — Plympton	—	1 — Fowey	6
Lord Eliott	2 — Liſkeard 2 — Grampound 2 — St. Germain's	—		6
Duke of Newcaſtle	2 — Boroughbridge 2 — Aldboro' York.	—	1 — Newark 1 — Eaſt Retford	6
Marquis of Buckingham	2 — Buckingham 2 — St. Mawes	—	1 — Buckinghamſh. 1 — Ayleſbury	6
Lord Ayleſbury	2 — Marlborough 2 — Great Bedwin	—	— —	4
Duke of Northumberland	2 — Launceſton 2 — Newport (Cor.)	—	— —	4
Duke of Marlborough	2 — Woodſtock 1 — Heyteſbury	—	1 — Oxfordſhire 1 — Oxford	5
Earl Fitzwilliam	2 — Malton 1 — Higham Ferrers	—	2 — Peterborough	5
Marquis of Lanſdowne	2 — Calne	—	2 — Wycombe	4
Lord Sydney	1 — Whitchurch	—	2 — Ludgerſhall	3
Duke of Devonſhire	2 — Knareſborough	—	1 — Derbyſhire 1 — Derby	4
Duke of Bedford	2 — Taviſtock	—	1 — Bedfordſhire 1 — Oakhampton	4
Marquis of Stafford	—	—	1 — Staffordſhire 1 — Litchfield 2 — Newcaſtle, Staff.	4
Lord Hertford	2 — Orford	—	—	2
Lord Abingdon	2 — Weſtbury	—	—	2
Duke of Norfolk	—		1 — Arundel	1
Duke of Rutland	1 — Bramber		1 — Grantham 1 — Scarbro' 1 — Newark	4
Duke of Richmond	—	—	1 — Chicheſter 1 — Seaford	2
Lord Radnor	2 — Downton	—	1 — New Sarum	3
Duke of Beaufort	—	—	1 — Monmouthſhire 1 — Monmouth 1 — Glouceſterſhire	3
Lord Sandwich	—	—	1 — Huntingdonſhire 2 — Huntingdon	3
Marquis of Bath	2 — Weobly	—	— —	2
Lord Egremont	2 — Midhurſt	—	— —	2
Lord Weſtmoreland	2 — Lyme Regis	—	— —	2
Lord Cornwallis	2 — Eye	—	— —	2
Duke of Grafton	—		1 — Bury 1 — Thetford	2
Duke of Dorſet	2 — Grinſtead		— —	2
Duke of Bridgewater	2 — Brackley	—	— —	2
Lord Beverley	2 — Beeralſton	—	— —	2
30 Peers nominate	66	influence	38	Total 104

NAMES

NAMES of PATRONS.	NOMINATIONS.	INFLUENCE.	Total Members returned by Peers.
Brought forward	66	Brought forward 38	104
Lord Camelford *nominates*	2 for Old Sarum	*influences*	2
Lord Foley	2 — Droitwich	1 — Worceſterſhire	3
Lord Bute	1 — Boſſiney	1 — Cardiff	2
Lord Portſmouth	—	1 — Andover	1
Lord Orford	1 — Caſtle Riſing	—	1
Lord Malmſbury	1 — Chriſtchurch	—	1
Lord Hardwicke	1 — Ryegate	1 — Cambridgeſhire	2
Lord Somers	1 — Ryegate	—	1
Lord Townſhend	1 — Tamworth	—	1
Lord Harrowby	2 — Tiverton	—	2
Lord Darlington	1 — Winchelſea	—	1
Lord Bulkeley	1 — Beaumaris	—	1
Lord Powis	1 — Montgomery	—	1
Duke of Bolton	—	1 — Totneſs	1
Lord Spencer	—	1 — Oakhampton 1 — St. Alban's	2
Lord Falmouth	2 — Truro	—	2
Lord Thanet	1 — Appleby	—	1
Lord Guildford	1 — Banbury	—	1
Lord Camden	—	1 — Bath	1
Lord Poulett	—	2 — Bridgewater	2
Lord Grofvenor	—	2 — Cheſter	2
Lord Bathurſt	—	1 — Cirenceſter	1
Lord Shafteſbury	—	1 — Dorcheſter	1
Lord Berkeley	—	1 — Glouceſterſhire	1
Lord Brownlow	—	1 — Grantham	1
Lord Pembroke	2 — Wilton	—	2
Lord Oxford	—	1 — Radnorſhire 1 — New Radnor	2
Duke of Mancheſter	—	1 — Huntingdonſhire	1
Lord Pelham	—	1 — Lewes	1
Duke of Portland	—	1 — Nottinghamſhire	1
Lord Uxbridge	1 — Milbourne Port	1 — Angleſea 1 — Carnarvon	3
Lord Exeter	—	2 — Stamford	2
Lord Warwick	—	2 — Warwick	2
Lord Petre	—	1 — Thetford	1
Lord Clarendon	—	1 — Wootton Baſſett	1
Lord Bolingbroke	—	1 — Wootton Baſſett	1
Lord Carliſle	—	2 — Morpeth	2
Lord Onſlow	—	1 — Guildford	1
Lord Walpole	—	1 — Lynn	1
Lord Grimſton	—	1 — St. Albans	1
Duke of Leeds	—	1 — Penryn	1
71 Peers nominate	88	influence 74	Total 162
The Treaſury *nominate*	2 for Queenborough		2
Ditto	—	*influence* 1 for Dover	1
Ditto	—	1 — Rocheſter	1
Ditto	—	1 — Plymouth	1
Ditto	—	2 — Windſor	2
71 Peers & the Treaſ. nom.	90	influence 79	Total 169

PATRONAGE OF COMMONERS.

NAMES of PATRONS.	NOMINATIONS.	INFLUENCE.	Total members returned by Commoners.
Wm. Drake, Esq. *nominates*	2 for Agmondesham *influences*		2
Lord Clive	2 for Bishops Castle —	1 for Ludlow	3
Rev. Mr. Holmes	2 for Newport (Ha.) 1 for Yarmouth (Ha.) —	—	3
Sir J. St. Aubyn, Bart.	1 for Helstone —	—	1
—— Rogers, Esq.	1 for Helstone —	—	1
W. Pulteney, Esq.	— —	4 for Weymouth, &c. 1 for Shrewsbury	5
R. Barwell, Esq.	2 for Tregony 1 for Winchelsea —	—	3
P. C. Crespigny, Esq.	2 for Aldborough (Suffolk)		2
—— Trefusis, Esq.	2 for Callington 1 for Ashburton —	—	3
Sir H. Bridgman, Bart.	— —	1 for Wenlock 1 for Wigan	2
J. Buller, Esq.	2 for Saltash 2 for West Looe —	—	4
—— Buller, esq.	2 for East Looe —	—	2
Sir Francis Buller, Bart.	— —	1 for Totnes	1
Sir R. Clayton, Bart.	2 for Blechingly —	—	2
Sir T. Dundas, Bart.	2 for Richmond —	—	2
Sir E. Deering, Bart.	2 for Romney —	—	2
Sir T. Frankland, Bart.	2 for Thirske —	—	2
Sir H. Burrard, Bart.	2 for Lymington —	—	2
Sir H. Calthorpe, Bart.	1 for Bramber —	1 for Hindon	2
Sir F. Basset, Bart.	— —	1 for St. Michael's 1 for Penryn	2
Sir J. Honeywood, Bart.	2 for Steyning —	—	2
Sir F. Sykes, Bart.	— —	2 for Wallingford	2
Sir J. Vanneck, Bart.	1 for Dunwich —	—	1
Sir F. Barrington, Bart.	1 for Newtown (Hants) —	—	1
Sir R. Worsley, Bart.	1 for Newtown (Hants) —	—	1
Sir C Hawkins, Bart.	— —	1 for St. Michael's	1
Sir R. Palke, Bart.	1 for Ashburton —	—	1
Sir G. Yonge, Bart.	— —	1 for Honiton	1
Sir C. Davers, Bart.	— —	1 for Bury	1
Sir S. Fludyer, Bart.	— —	1 for Chippenham	1
Sir W. W. Wynne, Bart.	— —	1 for Denbighshire	1
Lord Westcote	1 for Bewdley —	—	1
Lord Middleton	1 for Whitchurch —	—	1
Sir C. Gould Morgan	— —	1 for Brecon	1
W. Joliffe, Esq.	2 for Petersfield —	—	2
J. Robinson, Esq.	2 for Harwich —	—	2
—— Wilkins, Esq.	2 for Malmesbury —	—	2
R. Troward, Esq.	2 for Ilchester —	—	2
W. Praed, Esq.	— —	2 for St. Ives	2
T. P. Leigh, Esq.	2 for Newtown (Lancashire)	—	2
W. C. Meddlycott, Esq.	1 for Milbourne Port —	—	1
J. Calcraft, Esq.	2 for Wareham —	—	2
J. B. Church, Esq.	2 for Wendover —	—	2
Lady Irwin	2 for Horsham —	—	2
Mrs. Allanson	2 for Rippon —	—	2
45 Commoners	*nominate* 61	*influence* 22	Total 83

NAMES of PATRONS.	NOMINATIONS.	INFLUENCE.	Total members returned by Commoners.
Brought forward	61	22	83
Sir Jonathan Phillips *nom.*	2 for Camelford	*influences* —	2
Thomas Lifter, Esq.	1 for Clitheroe	— —	1
P. A. Curzon, Esq.	1 for Clitheroe	— —	1
John Mortlock, Esq.	—	— 2 for Cambridge Town	2
C. Anderson Pelham, Esq.	—	— 2 for Grimsby	2
J. F. Luttrell, Esq.	—	— 2 for Minehead	2
B. Barne, Esq.	1 for Dunwich	— —	1
J. Bond, Esq.	1 for Corfe Castle	— —	1
H. Bankes, Esq.	1 for Corfe Castle	— —	1
E. Lascelles, Esq.	1 for Northallerton	— —	1
H. Pierce, Esq.	1 for Northallerton	— —	1
R. Ladbroke, Esq.	1 for Gatton	— —	1
W. Currie, Esq.	1 for Gatton	— —	1
W. P. Ashe A'Court, Esq.	1 for Heytesbury	— —	1
B. Howard, Esq.	1 for Castle Rising	— —	1
George Hunt, Esq.	1 for Bodmin	— —	1
Lord Milford	—	— 1 for Haverfordwest	1
C. Forester, Esq.	—	— 1 for Wenlock	1
J. C. Jervoise, Esq.	1 for Yarmouth (Hants)	—	1
C. Sturt, Esq.	—	— 1 for Bridport	1
G. Rose, Esq.	1 for Christchurch	—	1
W. Evelyn, Esq.	—	— 1 for Hythe	1
St. C. F. Radcliffe, Esq.	—	— 1 for Hythe	1
T. W. Coke, Esq.	—	— 1 for Derby	1
T. Anson, Esq.	—	— 1 for Litchfield	1
W. Lee Antonie, Esq.	—	— 1 for Marlow	1
T. Williams, Esq.	—	— 1 for Marlow	1
R. Middleton, Esq.	—	— 1 for Denbigh	1
Philip Rashleigh, Esq.	—	— 1 for Fowey	1
C. Tudway, Esq.	—	— 1 for Wells	1
J. Dawkins, Esq.	—	— 1 for Chippenham	1
H. Penton, Esq.	—	— 1 for Winchester	1
R. Peel, Esq.	1 for Tamworth	—	1
James Sutton, Esq.	—	— 2 for Devizes	2
—— Whitaker, Esq.	—	— 2 for Shaftesbury	2
Sir P. Burrel, Bart.	—	— 1 for Boston	1
Jos. Iremonger, Esq.	—	— 1 for Andover	1
W. Beckford, Esq.	—	— 1 for Hindon	1
Sir J. Carter	—	— 2 for Portsmouth	2
E. Bastard, Esq.	—	— 2 for Dartmouth	2
Edward Milward, Esq.	2 for Hastings	— —	2
Thomas Lamb, Esq.	2 for Rye	— —	2
P. Stephens, Esq.	—	— 1 for Sandwich	1
Lord Mulgrave	—	— 1 for Scarbro'	1
R. Gamon, Esq.	—	— 1 for Winchester	1
Right Hon. T. Harley	—	— 1 for Leominster	1
23 Commoners *nominate*	82	*influence* 57	Total 139
Total by Peers and Treasury	—	—	169
Total of Members returned by Private Patronage, being a decided Majority of the Commons of Great Britain	— — —		308

FRIENDS

FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

Freemason's Tavern, Saturday, May 25, 1793.

AT an Extraordinary and numerous MEETING of the SOCIETY of the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtainig a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, held THIS DAY,

E. B. CLIVE, Esq. in the Chair.

RESOLVED,

That the following Address to the People of Great Britain, be printed and published:

THE immediate duty of this Society is to state briefly to the People of the kingdom, for whose benefit we have acted, in what situation the Cause of Reform, and they who are engaged in it, are left by the late transaction in Parliament. In so good a cause, it is honourable to have contended, and with a firm conviction that on its success depend the happiness and liberties of the nation, we can never suffer ourselves to despair. We are not deterred or disappointed by the present decision of the House of Commons, for neither is this decision final, nor is it a question, in which we were particularly entitled to expect, that truth and reason would be supported by superior numbers. We are not discouraged by this defeat. It would, indeed, be a ground of discouragement to us, if we could believe that the People of England were really unwilling to promote a change in the Construction of the House of Commons, or indifferent about it. Such, however, is the conclusion drawn by our opponents, from the silence of the principal cities and counties on the present occasion. We trust that we shall be furnished with a practical answer to this objection by numerous and strong Declarations and Petitions from a great majority of the kingdom. These are the means, and the only means by which we expect or desire to succeed. If the country in general will unite with us in demanding a Reform of Parliament, we have no doubt of its being obtained in a regular Parliamentary way, without a hazard of any kind. If, on the contrary, it should appear, after a fair and sufficient trial of the disposition of the country, that the measure has utterly lost its popularity, and that the Nation, whether adverse or indifferent, will not take an active part in support of it, then indeed it will become us to abandon all thoughts of a useless vexatious perseverance in so deserted a cause; and having appealed to the Highest Tribunal, by which a National Question can be determined, that of the People themselves, we must submit with patience to their ultimate decision. Individuals may adhere to their principles, but it will be in vain for them to persist in their endeavours. The duty that survives hope will never be performed with energy or effect.—On the other hand, some circumstances encourage us to persevere. We have reason to believe that the intervention of the war with France, and the alarms, whether well or ill founded, which have prevailed throughout England, during the last winter, and which we have no doubt were excited and inflamed for the special purpose of checking the disposition of the country in favour of a Reform, and of calumniating the characters of those who promoted it. These, we believe, are the true causes of that silence and inactivity on the part of the Nation which have been objected to us in Parliament.

We are therefore of opinion, that the sense of the country has not yet been declared on this great question, and that their final decision of it has not been given. The temper of the House of Commons is evidently moderated since the subject was agitated last year. The Members, who stand for the Public on this occasion, are treated, as in all cases the representatives of a great popular interest, and of the popular will ought to be, with some degree of decorum. Declarations made by persons of great authority in the House, tho' ambiguous or unfavourable, suppose and admit the possibility, at least, of their reverting hereafter to former professions, and of their concurring with us at some future uncertain period. When such men keep the opinions they deliver, within the reach of recal, it is to be presumed that others who have no opinions at all, will see the imprudence of binding themselves by unqualified declarations which they may not be able to abandon or retract, however careless of character and consistency, and though urged to it hereafter by the only motives that ever influence their conduct.

The ground we have gained by the reception of our Petition, appears to us to be important, and the station it gives us impregnable. It is not a circumstance of little moment to the cause of Reform, that a Petition stating to the House of Commons itself, such facts and such arguments, with a direct offer on the part of the Petitioners, to establish every one of their allegations by sufficient evidence, should be received without dispute, and recorded for ever on the Votes and Journals of the

the House. No objection was made to the form or terms of the Petition. No part of its contents was denied, or even questioned. The motion to bring up the Petition was not opposed by any man. The House heard it distinctly read. They ordered it to lie on their table; and after a debate of two days, refused to appoint a Commiitee to take it into conſideration. We state the fact to the world, and leave it without any further observation.

In the conduct of this buſiness hitherto, we are not conscious of having omitted any thing that could be expected from the efforts of a few individuals, to rouse and engage the attention of the people to their own eſſential intereſt. They who think we have been deficient in any part of our duty, or that we ought still to proceed with activity and vigour, are bound to inſtruct us by their example, or at least, to strengthen us by their assistance. We have taken our station, and we shall not abandon it. The Nation shall at all times find us at our post alert, prepared, and determined, whenever we are called upon by the public voice to renew and to continue our efforts.

In name, and by order

of the Society,

(Signed) F. B. CLIVE, Chairman.

JUST PUBLISHED,

REPORT on the STATE of the REPRESENTATION, delivered by their Committee to the Society of the Friends of the People.

Printed, by Order of the Society, for D. STUART, at the Rooms of their Committee, No. 52, Frith-ſtreet, Soho; and to be had of all the Bookſellers in Town and Country, price One Shilling.

PROCEEDINGS of the Society of the Friends of the People, price One Shilling. Publiſhed by R. H. Weſtley, oppoſite St. Clement's Church, Strand.

AUTHENTIC COPY of the Petition, praying for a Reform of Parliament, preſented to the Houſe of Commons, on the 6th of May, 1793, by CHARLES GREY, Eſq. and ſigned only by Members of the Society of the Friends of the People, is publiſhed, price Threepence, by D. Stuart, No. 52, Frith-ſtreet, Soho; and a ſmaller Edition of it is alſo publiſhed, price only One Penny, by M. Gurney, No. 128, Holborn-hill; R. H. Weſtley, No. 201, Strand; T. Spence, No. 8, Little Turnſtile; and may be had of all the Bookſellers.